

DontWiden270.org Remarks on I-270/I-495 P3 Project at Rockville Mayor and Council Meetings

January 25, 2021

Thank you, Mayor Newton.

I'm Janet Gallant, one of the coordinators of DontWiden270.org.

I first want to say, you gave powerful testimony on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in response to this unprecedented threat to the City of Rockville. Thank goodness for you and the Council.

The threat continues, and it's enormous and accelerating. Everything that makes Rockville one of the most livable cities in the U.S. is at risk.

MDOT is pushing ahead at unseemly speed. Next Monday, they'll announce the winning bidder to be the private developer of Phase 1.

Everything about this process is opaque and stacked against local jurisdictions.

- You'll find no reliable answers about highway design because the plans and details are left up to the private phase developer.
- And the phase developer's design is driven by scheduling and cost considerations. That's what it said in the Request for Proposals.

Rockville may have to fend for itself.

- We haven't heard the County or State government talking specifically about protecting Rockville, other than to say, "Stay within the physical footprint."
- What does that mean? The sound walls? The Limits of Disturbance that are too narrow?
- Rockville certainly didn't ask for this – you weren't consulted on this. But it's there.

We have so much to lose if the largest P3 highway in the country slices through the heart of our city.

- Homes and communities will be devastated on both sides of the highway.
- Our institutions -- like Julius West, Fallsmead Elementary, and the Rockville Senior Center -- will be gravely impacted by pollution, construction, and noise.
- Traffic will be worse, during and after construction, on and off the highway.
- Health, the environment, stormwater management, and more will be gravely affected.

- The project will cost the City of Rockville and taxpayers enormous sums because this project and the P3 model push risk onto the State and the City and away from the P3 contractor.
- The high tolls will further advantage the most privileged in Rockville and elsewhere and harm the rest.

The City has to do everything it can to be prepared.

- Rockville has outstanding staff and expertise, both legal and technical.
- But no city of this size has experience with a P3 project like this one.
- It's the biggest of its kind anywhere.
- It will be developed by an international conglomerate with vast legal resources and an eye on its bottom line.

Outside expertise is essential to support all of you, and to help you know what you're facing and what tools are available to protect what's best about this city.

February 1, 2021

Good Evening Mayor Newton and Council members.

My name is Linda Rosendorf. I am one of the coordinators of DontWiden270.org. Janet Gallant spoke with you last week.

The Maryland Department of Transportation is moving incredibly fast to push this ill-conceived project forward. Widening I-270 is among the first projects that will be implemented. It is critical that the City remain alert and active.

I would like to bring to your attention two new significant MDOT actions.

- On Jan. 27, MDOT announced that they had had selected Alternative 9 from the list of build options. Not surprisingly, MDOT did not choose the "no build" option favored by the City and Dontwiden270.org. Any plan for reversible lanes was also rejected.

Alternative 9 would convert the existing HOV lane on I-270 to a high occupancy toll lane and add one managed lane in each direction. Vehicles with 3 people will be able to travel free, a change from the current HOV lane that allows free travel for vehicles with 2 people.

The plan would place the HOT lanes in the middle of the highway.

- This week, MDOT is expected to announce the Phase Developer that they have selected as their preferred proposer for Phase 1.

The Phase Developer will be the company overseeing the design, financing, construction, and maintenance of the toll lanes for a term of 50 years. They will come up with the actual design and we won't know the details and commitments until they are announced.

Most importantly, the Phase Developer is the entity with which the City of Rockville will interact and negotiate agreements.

Legal and Advisory Assistance: I would like to end by expressing a personal opinion. I am a strong believer in collaboration. There are a number of organizations that are fighting this incredibly bad project. However, while all the groups oppose the toll widening plan, we also have individual priorities. I think the City should cooperate with other organizations but Rockville has unique considerations and needs its own legal and advisory teams to ensure that the City's concerns are adequately addressed.

February 1, 2021

Good Evening!

I am Sally Stolz, another of the Co-coordinators of DontWiden270.org.

First I would like to thank you, Mayor Newton, and Councilmembers for your excellent efforts to date to protect Rockville citizens from MDOT's proposed toll road disaster. Mayor Newton's September 10 testimony favoring the "No Build" alternative presented MDOT with many "inconvenient truths" and was truly inspired. Bravo!

I would like to add two reasons why I feel Rockville needs expert legal and technical advice to protect its citizens from the potentially enormous financial and quality-of-life costs of MDOT's chosen Alternative 9.

First: Our small city, fabulous as it and its excellent staff are, is unprepared to negotiate with the many specialized, sophisticated and highly experienced lawyers and negotiators employed by the multi-billion dollar companies with which we'll be forced to make deals. We need to match wits with them to be sure Rockville is not steam-rolled over.

Second: We don't know what we don't know. Here are some questions that we DO know to ask:

1. If the bridges are torn down and reconstructed for five years, how will those of us living on the west side of 270 get to the library, swim center, metro, town center and all the other places we use bridges over 270 to get to, and how much extra time will it cost us?
2. Even though Alternative 9 says it only adds 2 lanes – one on each side – won't the High Occupancy Toll or HOT lanes need an additional merge lane on each side? So aren't we really

talking about adding 4 lanes to our existing 12 to 14 lanes? Will that fit within our soundwalls? How can we guarantee that our sound walls are not moved?

3. The plan removes the existing separated exit and entrance access lanes at each interchange. How will back-ups at these interchanges affect the rest of the general lanes?
4. How can we guarantee that people living near 270 won't be kept up at night for five years during construction?
5. How can we guarantee that this unwanted project doesn't also cost Rockville taxpayers hundreds or thousands of dollars per person in traffic mitigation and other costs?
6. What would a 50-year period of a behemoth international conglomerate deciding what improvements can or can NOT be made to I-270 through Rockville look like?

So those are examples of questions we KNOW to ask. But what questions do we need to be asking that we don't even KNOW to ask? We don't know what we don't know!

This is why we strongly support the City Council authorizing the money necessary to acquire expert legal and technical help to defend the city from potentially enormous financial and quality-of-life costs.